

Three Decades of Dentistry Study in Rijeka

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Introduction

The 30th anniversary of Dentistry study at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka is an important occasion, which obliges us to look back and recall the very beginning of the education of dentists in these regions. At the same time it is an opportunity to remember with pride and appreciation all those who, over the past thirty years, contributed to the organisation of Dentistry study as it is today. Finally, it is an opportunity to come to an objective conclusion regarding its future, based on the development of Dentistry study at our Faculty today.

The need for highly qualified dental staff with university education, based on epidemiological data on the condition of oral health and the incidence of dental-oral diseases in the region of the Primorsko-Goranska and Istria district, lead to a decision to found the Department of Dentistry at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka. Thus the first generation of 46 students enrolled in Dentistry study in Rijeka during the academic year 1973/74. In 1973 the University of Rijeka was founded, which contributed greatly to the creation of a positive atmosphere and suitable environment for the commencement of Dentistry study.

Teaching staff, teaching bases and dynamics of the development of departments in Dentistry study

At the Medical Faculty in Rijeka, in cooperation with health services, staff and spatial and mate-

rial conditions for the organisation of Dentistry study existed before 1973. Teaching of basic, pre-clinical and general medical subjects were assigned to already existing staff, institutes, clinics and institutions. However, it was necessary to ensure scientific-teaching staff for professional dentistry courses. The first teachers were Prof. Juraj Hraste for the course “Dental Morphology with an Introduction to Dentistry” and “Preventive and Child Dentistry”, and Prof. Radomir Tavčar for “Oral and Jaw Surgery”, while the courses on “Dental Pathology” and “Dental Prosthetics” were held for the first two years by Prof. Mitja Bartenjev and Prof. Volovšek, who came from the Department of Dentistry of the Medical Faculty in Ljubljana. Cooperation was later established with the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb, which has successfully continued until today. This cooperation resulted in the arrival of numerous eminent professors from Zagreb, who unselfishly helped in the realisation of the teaching programme and the formation of scientific-teaching staff for our study. The following professors contributed significantly: Zdenko Njemirovskij, Zvonimir Kosovel, Danko Nikšić, Krešimir Kraljević, Stanislav Vukovojac, Vjekoslav Jerolimov, Vlado Carek, Adnan Čatović, Josip Pandurić, Vladimir Amšel, Goran Knežević, Pavel Kobler, Jelena Aurer-Koželj, Milutin Dobrenić, Ilija Škrinjarić, Vladimir Lapter, Asja Miličić and Zvonimir Poje, and many other assistant professors, assistants and coworkers in teaching, not mentioned here. Apart from this form of cooperation, cooperation with the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb successfully progressed

on all levels, from the administration of the Faculty to student organisations. Consequently, the teaching plan and programme of our study is identical to the programme at the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb, with only a few slight changes or changed timetables in some semesters.

The basic aim of this higher education in dentistry is the creation of specific, highly qualified, staff who can in the given conditions independently care for the dental-oral health of certain populations at the level of primary health care. For this reason it is particularly important in the education of dentists that practical work involves clinical practice in professional dental subjects, which can only be carried out in personnel, spatial and materially-technically well organised teaching bases in health institutions. This part of teaching during the first seven years was carried out in the adapted and modern well equipped premises of the Polyclinic within the Public Health Institute, and later in the Dental Service of Rijeka Health Clinic at 40 and 42 Krešimir Street, while part of the teaching of Oral and Jaw Surgery was performed in the Dr. Zdravko Kušić Clinical Hospital, i.e. today the Clinical Hospital Centre in Rijeka. For ten years part of the teaching at the Department of Dental Pathology and Dental Prosthetics was held in the premises of Judicial Medicine in Vukovar Street, which was to a large extent equipped by the donations of Italian students.

Thanks to relatively good equipment and organisation of the teaching bases, in which expert professionals worked from all fields of dental medicine, and because of the relatively small number of enrolled students, our Dentistry study produced highly qualified staff who successfully mastered all dentistry skills. However, in the second half of the 1990s a reform of the health system took place, which understandably also included privatisation of primary health care. Because of privatisation within the Rijeka Health Clinic and the natural drain of staff, or failure to fulfil obligations to scientific advancement, significant deterioration of the teaching bases of Dentistry study occurred. When one adds to this the ten-year pause in securing new staff from the field of dental medicine through specialisation, it is not difficult to conclude that the majority of professional courses experienced difficulties with regard to realisation of the practical part of clinical teaching.

A solution was found in the founding of a new health institution: "Dental Polyclinic of the Medical Faculty in Rijeka", which opened on the 1st June 2001 at 40 Krešimir Street in Rijeka, and by sending 22 assistants from Dentistry Study to specialise in different dental disciplines. The following specialists in Dental Prosthetics from the Rijeka Health Clinic worked part-time in the newly established Polyclinic: Zdravko Delić Ph.D., Marica Šimunović-Šoškić Ph.D., Zvonimir Braut M.Sc. and Tomislav Hraste MD, and also Darko Rački M.Sc., specialist in Oral Surgery and Prof. Iva Vidas, specialist in Dental and Oral Pathology with Periodontology, who already worked at the same location. Thus an attempt was made to bridge the period up to the end of specialisation of assistants and to ensure uninterrupted clinical practice.

At the end of 2001 the staff and equipment were moved from the premises of Judicial Medicine to the premises of the newly founded Polyclinic. Thus an integral teaching base was obtained for all dental disciplines at one locality (with the exception of Oral Surgery). Many workers of our faculty helped with this project, although special mention should be made of the efforts of the Board of Directors at that time and the Deans, Prof. Danilo Pavešić and Prof. Stipan Jonjić, Vice-Deans for Dentistry Study Prof. Iva Vidas and Zdravko Delić Ph.D., Head of Dentistry Study Maja Kovačević Ph.D. and acting Director of the Polyclinic, Sonja Pezelj-Ribarić Ph.D. Following the renovation of the premises and installation of new dental units and other equipment, and with the imminent return of staff with specialist training, the Dental Polyclinic were able to ensure suitable conditions for the clinical part of teaching of all dental disciplines and a brighter future for Dentistry Study.

At the time of the founding of Dentistry Study all dentistry courses were organised within the Department of Dentistry, headed by Prof. Radomir Tavčar. After completing all five years of study, three departments were established for specific dentistry courses. Within the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (Head: Prof. Branko Žuža) were the following courses: Oral Surgery, Maxillofacial Surgery, Oral Medicine, Periodontology, Oral Hygiene and Dental Implantology. The Department of Dental Pathology and Dental Prosthetics (Head:

Prof. Branimir Maričić) included the following courses: Dental Pathology, Mobile Prosthetics, Fixed Prosthetics, Dental Materials, Dental Propedeutics and Diagnostics and Gerontology. The Department of Clinical Pedodontics (Head Prof. Juraj Hraste) included: Pedodontics, Orthodontics, Orofacial Genetics, Introduction to Dentistry, General and Social Dentistry and Morphology of the Tooth with Dental Anthropology. In 2000 the Department of Dental Pathology and Dental Prosthetics became the Department of Oral Pathology (Head Zvonimir Braut M.Sc.), and the Department of Dental Prosthetics (acting Head Zvonimir Braut) and with the last change in 2002 the Department of Oral Pathology became the Department of Dental Diseases and the Department of Oral and Periodontal Diseases. At the end of 2003 the Head of the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery was Prof. Marijan Car, Head of the Department of Clinical Pedodontics Laura Mady Ph.D., Head of the Department of Dental Prosthetics Zdravko Delić Ph.D., Head of the Department of Oral and Periodontal Diseases Sonja Pezelj-Ribarić Ph.D. and Head of the Department of Dental Diseases Ivana Brekalo-Pršo Ph.D.

The dynamics of the reorganisation of departments was primarily connected with the formation of new scientific-teaching staff. From the founding of Dentistry study up until today cooperation between departments, organisation of teaching within certain departments and coordination of scientific-teaching work and integration of the content and form of teaching within and between departments has been on a high level. There is no reason not to anticipate that it will be so in the future.

Graduate and post-graduate teaching

During the last 30 years (up to and including academic year 2002/2003) 1171 students enrolled in the first year of Dentistry study, and 793 students graduated up until the end of 2003, including students of special Dentistry Study organised for Italian students (amounting to 67.72%). From the academic year 1988/1999 up until 1994/1995 and academic year 1997/1998 220 students enrolled in the special Dentistry study for Italian nationals and 40 others later moved from other studies. This required additional efforts in organisation and teaching. With regard to

regular Dentistry Study, 951 students enrolled in the first year, which amounts to 31.7 per generation. It should also be mentioned that our regular Dentistry study was also attended by foreign students from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Macedonia, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Syria, Kuwait, Sudan, Jordan and Palestine, which reflects international recognition.

Study is organised so that it lasts for ten semesters and the teaching methods applied in theoretical and practical teaching are in the form of lectures, seminars and practice. During graduate teaching the students attain a wide general medical base, without which further training in dental disciplines is unthinkable. All the courses in the teaching plan and programme are carefully organised and connected, and mutually complement each other. The students are trained for epidemiological monitoring, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diseases of the stomatognathic system. At the same time, through study, they acquire knowledge and skill which is the basis for further professional progress by specialisation or even scientific improvement through postgraduate and doctoral study. In this respect the fact that many of our students today are acknowledged specialists in various dental disciplines, and that after attending postgraduate teaching in clinical pathophysiology and social medicine 55 dentists acquired a master's degree (M.sc.) and 20 defended their doctoral dissertation (PhD). (A list of names and study titles is attached). Many of these staff members participate today in the teaching of Dentistry study. Thus it can be said that a solid scientific-teaching base has been created which guarantees the existence and even higher standard of study in the future. In addition teachers of Dentistry study have in the past participated in the realisation of teaching graduate study of general medicine, and postgraduate studies, or were mentors/tutors for M.Sc. and Ph.D. theses. Our teachers, assistants and coworkers have presented many scientific and professional studies at domestic and international congresses and symposia, and published them in domestic and world recognised scientific and professional journals, and also printed several textbooks and scripts. The aforementioned, together with the number of announced and accepted themes for M.Sc. papers and Ph.D. theses on dental medicine, guarantees further progress of science and the profession in this region.

Former employees of Dentistry Study

As commented at the beginning of this article, the 30th anniversary of our Study is an occasion when we can recall with gratitude all those who, during the last thirty years, contributed to the development of Dentistry study as it is today. We recall here all the Deans and administrations who helped in the establishment and development of Dentistry study at the Faculty. Thus, we recall Prof. Branimir Marčić, Prof. Iva Vidas and Zdravko Delić Ph.D., former Vice-Dean of Dentistry study, as well as the first Head of the Department of Dentistry Prof. Radomir Tavčar and Head of the study Prof. Juraj Hraste and Maja Kovačević Ph.D. We thank all the scientific-teaching staff, assistant-technical staff, directors and workers in the teaching bases, extramural coworkers and all those who indirectly or directly worked or still work for the benefit of Dentistry study, and whose names are not mentioned here.

However, this is a fitting occasion and a pleasant duty to recall all teachers, assistants and coworkers in teaching of the professional dental courses, who are presently in well-deserved retirement, and

they are: Dušan Bošković M.Sc., lecturer (1973-1995), Zvonimir Braut Ph.D., lecturer (1973-2002), Prof. Vladimir Cipruš (1974-1996), Stanko Grbas M.Sc., assistant (1986-1991), Prof. Juraj Hraste (1972-1998), Javor Majer M.Sc., assistant, Prof. Iva Vidas (1994-2002), Prof. Branko Žuža (1977-1999), Petar Žužić, assistant (1993-1997). We also remember former employees, dentists, who in various functions and professions contributed to the teaching of dental subjects: Sanja Anđiloć, Miljenka Barlow, Višnja Blašković-Šubat, Miljenka Blažević, Neda Brkić, Josip Brusić, Jasna Čikeš, Jadranka Domić, Davor Dorčić, Mira Faraguna, Andreja Dužević-Srejić, Laura Foško-Glavaš, Goran Grenko, Franjo Janeš, Milan Kranjčić, Igor Kušička, Irena Kvasić, Angelina Maras, Ksenija Mihoković-Pauletić, Vesna Najman-Krvavica, Lea Oštrić, Darko Rački, Frano Sladović, Arianna Šjardi, Ante Tić, Klaudija Tomljenić, Ivan Volf, Ante Žgombić i Marijan Župan. They all made a deep impression and blazed the trail that we take today. Once again grateful thanks to all!

The task of the present and future generations in Dentistry study is the furtherance of past achievements. We are all convinced that this will be so.